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Egalitarianism and Hierarchy in Copperbelt Religious Practice:  
On the Social Work of Pentecostal Ritual

Abstract:

This article offers an analysis of Pentecostal ritual life focused on a core tension in this religion, namely that between the egalitarianism associated with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all believers and the hierarchy that follows from the charismatic authority of church leaders. Drawing on ethnographic material from the Zambian Copperbelt, I trace out the egalitarian and hierarchical aspects of Pentecostal ritual in order to demonstrate the importance of both of these elements to the social relationships that Pentecostal adherence produces. While the tension between egalitarianism and hierarchy is evident in all Pentecostal groups, on the Copperbelt their interaction produces social results that build on extant cultural models, and that have particular significance in the light of Zambia's recent economic history. These local resonances in turn allow us to address discontinuity, a central topic in analyses of Pentecostalism, as well as the role of creativity in ritual practice.

Key Words:

Pentecostalism, ritual, hierarchy, egalitarianism, sociality, Zambia

This article is about the ritual life of Pentecostal Christians on the Zambian Copperbelt. At first glance, this focus may seem like something of an oxymoron; as a form of Christianity characterized by spontaneity and surprise, not to mention a vehement rejection of established liturgical forms, it is easy to regard Pentecostalism as a religion without ritual. As Martin Lindhardt (2011; also see Robbins 2004: 126) has recently pointed out, scholars of Pentecostalism have not been immune to this view, and academic treatments of Pentecostal ritual have been notably few.<sup>1</sup> This lacuna is surprising both in the light of the runaway expansion of Pentecostalism across the globe in recent decades – which has been paralleled by a similarly dramatic increase in academic engagement with this religion – and the fact that, despite believers' insistence to the contrary, 'Pentecostal life is saturated with ritual to an unusual extent' (Robbins 2010: 164).

Recently, however, this tide has begun to turn, and more analyses of Pentecostal ritual have emerged. In these studies, a central concern has been the relationship between ritual and social life, and more specifically the kinds of social relationships and structures that Pentecostal ritual produces. Here we find two key models of social organization at play, which we can broadly characterize as egalitarian and hierarchical. Analyses focused on egalitarian relationships often emphasize what Victor Turner called 'communitas' (see Turner 1969), to show how shared ritual practice – praying and singing together, for example – generates social ties and creates a sense of belonging. In such situations, 'a direct, egalitarian encounter, a fellowship between people as people, frequently occurs,' making Pentecostal ritual an important site of 'community building' (Albrecht 1999: 212; also see Luhrmann 2012: 279). Joel Robbins (2009) has taken this line of argument further by demonstrating that the heightened sense of connection that comes with Pentecostal ritual is central to its success in building institutions, particularly in the Global South.

In contrast to those treatments of Pentecostal ritual that highlight its egalitarianism, other discussions of this religion have shown it to produce hierarchy. Key here is Paul Gifford's work in Ghana, which demonstrates that practices like prophecy and deliverance from demons (i.e. exorcism) turn pastors into 'famous figures' known for their charisma (Gifford 2004: 108, 2011). Similarly, Thomas Kirsch, writing about an African Independent Church that shares many characteristics with charismatic and Pentecostal groups, connects the power of religious leaders to ritual practice. In particular, preaching and reading from the Bible create a connection between the authority of scripture and that of the preacher, who mediates the power of the text by bringing it to life through speech (Kirsch 2008: 153). Finally, in my own work on Copperbelt Pentecostalism I have shown how the material offerings known in prosperity gospel parlance as 'seeds' are bound up in a process of hierarchical differentiation through which the spiritual superiority of church leaders is continually reproduced (Haynes 2013).

Taken together, these analyses reveal that Pentecostal ritual life both draws believers into democratic, open-ended, and largely egalitarian religious communities, *and* produces clear distinctions between individuals, resulting in differentiated, hierarchical structures. While to a certain extent these contrasting emphases have to do with differences in the places being examined – differences between suburban America and an African urban center like Accra, for example<sup>2</sup> – I do not think they can be explained by appeals to sociocultural factors alone. Not only does one find references to *communitas* in non-Western contexts, where we might expect to find hierarchy (e.g. Robbins 2009, Smilde 2011), we also find discussions of hierarchy among Pentecostal and charismatic Christians in the individualized, egalitarian West (e.g. Coleman 2000, Csordas 1997). This suggests that more is happening in these cases than a simple reflection of, or even a challenge to, predominating social or cultural patterns.

I would like to suggest that what discussions of the egalitarian and hierarchical aspects of Pentecostalism reveal is a key tension that sits at the heart of this religion (see Meyer 2010: 122). By this I am referring to the often-strained relationship between charismatic authority on the one hand and democratic access to the power of the Holy Spirit on the other. It is this contentious relationship that I wish to focus on in my discussion of Pentecostal ritual. While, as I have just stated, I think that this tension is fundamental to Pentecostal belief and practice, and that it is operative wherever this religion is taken up, the interaction between what we might think of as two relational poles, one hierarchical and one egalitarian, plays out in ways that have culturally specific resonances. This is certainly the case in the ethnographic context I examine here.

In what follows, I show that structured charismatic hierarchy and unstructured charismatic egalitarianism are both involved in the social productivity of Pentecostalism in urban Zambia – indeed, both are critical to it. This is true not in spite of the fact that from a social structural perspective these two aspects of Pentecostal ritual work against each other, but rather precisely because this is the case. As we will see, while hierarchical charismatic authority is the most important and compelling part of Copperbelt Pentecostalism's social productivity, the possibility that hierarchical ties may be corrupted means that mechanisms for breaking down these relationships and constructing new ones through appeals to the egalitarian elements of Pentecostalism are especially important. My argument in this article builds on an earlier discussion of Pentecostal practice (Haynes 2013), in which I have shown how the apparent internal contractions that surround material offerings work together to produce and protect social relationships among Copperbelt believers.

I begin my analysis with a brief outline of how both egalitarianism and hierarchy figure in Pentecostal belief and practice. I then move on to the ritual context that serves as the focus of my analysis: the Sunday morning church service. After providing a detailed description of this ritual, I make a second pass through the various components of Pentecostal worship in order to pull out the egalitarian and hierarchical elements at play. Having identified these aspects of the Sunday service, I turn my attention to the particular importance of hierarchy in

Copperbelt social life, seen most clearly in what I, following James Ferguson (2013), call relationships of ‘dependence.’ These relationships allow us to understand both the particular appeal of Pentecostalism in contemporary urban Zambia, and the importance of egalitarianism to the Pentecostal social project. While in this analysis I emphasize the link between Pentecostal relationships and those that have historically been central to social life on the Copperbelt, I conclude by showing that novelty and creativity nevertheless have a part to play in all of this.

My discussion here applies generally to the Copperbelt, and I am quite sure that it has resonances with other parts of southern Africa as well. However, the primary location of my ethnography is a neighborhood that I call Nsofu<sup>3</sup>, a middle-class, but nevertheless socioeconomically diverse, township with a population of about 25,000 people located on the outskirts of the city of Kitwe.<sup>4</sup> Like most neighborhoods in urban Zambia, a country that has made a constitutional declaration that it is a ‘Christian nation,’ Nsofu is home to dozens of churches. These include a Catholic parish, a Seventh Day Adventist congregation, and a United Church of Zambia, as well as more than a dozen Pentecostal churches and fellowships. Nearly all of Nsofu’s Pentecostal groups are locally initiated congregations with fewer than 100 members. In addition to the believers who regularly attend these churches, there are many other people in Nsofu who could be described as Pentecostal sympathizers. While they have not left their mainline congregations to join Pentecostal churches, these individuals regularly attend Pentecostal meetings, particularly the mid-week, interdenominational gatherings that have become very popular on the Copperbelt in recent years. Keeping this brief sketch of the Nsofu religious landscape in view, we can now turn our attention to how egalitarianism and hierarchy develop through Pentecostal practice.

### **‘The wind blows wherever it pleases... so it is with the Spirit’**

Pentecostalism is a form of Christianity that emphasizes the immediate experience of the Holy Spirit through practices such as glossolalia, prophecy, and deliverance from demons. According to the biblical text, God has promised to pour the Holy Spirit out on ‘all flesh’ regardless of age, status, or sex (Joel 2: 28-29). Pentecostals therefore understand the ‘gifts’ of the Holy Spirit that I have just mentioned – prophecy, speaking in tongues, and so forth – to be available to all believers. Here is Pentecostal egalitarianism at its most basic. Although in practice Pentecostal churches often reproduce established hierarchies, particularly those of gender (Soothill 2007, Mate 2002), at least in principle the Holy Spirit is no respecter of persons (Robbins 2004: 120). This egalitarian impulse is the foundation of Pentecostal ritual life and has very likely played a central part in the expansion of this form of Christianity across the Global South: because the only requirement for Pentecostal worship is the Holy Spirit, and not a seminary-educated leader or a special building, churches spring up very quickly even in places that are resource-poor (Robbins 2009).

Free access to the Holy Spirit for all believers also means that access to positions of leadership is open to everyone (Kärkkäinen 2010: 228), a fact that turns our

attention to the processes through which a fundamentally egalitarian religion develops a religious hierarchy. When a certain person appears to be particularly adept in exercising spiritual gifts, perhaps by giving accurate prophecies or successfully casting a demon out of a fellow believer, he or she will often very quickly rise to a position of leadership in a congregation. On the Copperbelt such people are referred to as 'men (and women) of God,' powerful believers who have a special 'anointing' from the Holy Spirit that enables them to do things ordinary Pentecostals cannot do – or at least, to exercise the spiritual gifts that are available to everyone with special skill and efficacy. This is largely a difference of degree rather than a difference of kind, but it is a difference nonetheless, a framework of spiritual distinction that structures Pentecostal hierarchy.

If this process of spiritual differentiation happens in an established group, it may simply result in an emerging leader being incorporated into the existing church hierarchy. However, it may also give rise to schism. When a believer on the Copperbelt begins to demonstrate his spiritual distinction, others soon start referring to him as 'pastor,' and from there it is a short step to him organizing a prayer meeting or fellowship of his own, usually with an eye to eventually establishing a church. The possibility of schism – of a new religious hierarchy – therefore follows directly from Pentecostalism's egalitarianism, as at any moment a different person might receive the power of the Holy Spirit, which, like the wind, 'blows wherever it pleases' (John 3: 8). As Birgit Meyer puts it, 'As every believer, in principle, can be filled with the Holy Spirit and assume spiritual authority, there is room... for endless fission and the opening of new churches' (Meyer 2010: 122; also see Eriksen 2012, in press).

In summary, in Pentecostalism hierarchy and egalitarianism coexist in dynamic tension, which sometimes bubbles over into conflict. In the potentially endless cycle of schisms, religious authority develops out of the egalitarian space of Pentecostal worship, and a new church or fellowship is formed. In turn, this new religious community may be challenged from within as worship gives rise to still other authorities that may threaten the established structure.<sup>5</sup> Having teased out the egalitarian and hierarchical aspects of Pentecostalism, we are now in a position to turn our attention to the way that this form of Christianity is practiced in Nsofu.

In what follows, I offer an analysis of Pentecostal ritual life through a close reading of a Sunday morning service. Having noted the pervasiveness of ritual in the everyday lives of believers, it might seem strange to take as my focus this most formal of Pentecostal contexts, rather than any of the numerous other spaces in which ritual is evident. My reason for focusing on Sunday morning is that it serves as something of an urtext for all Pentecostal religious practice. The Sunday service provides the liturgical map for most Pentecostal gatherings, including overnight prayer meetings, weekly *fitente* (home groups), and even the family devotionals that were sometimes part of life in the pastor's home where I lived during my fieldwork. Moreover, formal Pentecostal meetings serve as a training ground for private devotional practice and for the kinds of spontaneous ritual activities that characterize informal gatherings of Pentecostal friends

(Haynes n.d.). In other words, the prayers, songs, and messages that believers encounter on Sunday morning inform their religious lives in both formal and informal contexts, and an analysis of a Sunday service therefore sheds light on Pentecostal ritual life across the board.

### **The Pentecostal Worship Service in Brief**

In Nsofu, as in much of sub-Saharan Africa, Sunday morning is a busy time. Walking across the township one is sure to find many people going to church – women in the uniforms that signify membership in a mainline congregation, young men in polished shoes with large Bibles under their arms, children whose faces shine with the recent application of Vaseline. Some Pentecostal congregations on the Copperbelt hold services in their own church buildings, while others may have only started construction and gather in the meantime under a corrugated roof in the open air. Most groups, however, do not have property, and meet instead in private homes or, more commonly, in rented schoolrooms. Despite this diversity of setting, however, the form and content of Pentecostal worship is virtually identical from group to group.

Every Pentecostal service begins with what is called ‘intercession.’ At some meetings this is scheduled before the start of the main service, while at others it is simply the first activity on the agenda. Intercession is rather sparsely attended, and those who show up for this first part of the service are usually the most dedicated and zealous members of the congregation (or ethnographers who have not yet figured out that Pentecostal meetings do not start when they are scheduled to). Intercession is facilitated by a leader who is typically a layperson and never the senior pastor; indeed, members of the pastoral staff are rarely in attendance at this part of the service. The intercession leader instructs the group to pray for a series of rather specific topics, such as the meeting that is to follow, the health of the pastor, the destruction of witches and Satanists, or – importantly – individual ‘burdens’ (*fisendo*) known only to a believer him or herself.

Once a theme has been announced, believers pray in that line for anywhere from five to fifteen minutes before moving on to another topic. The petitions are made through what I call collective-personal prayer. This practice, characteristic of Pentecostals around the world, is exactly what it sounds like: everyone gathered prays out loud at the same time. The result is a cacophony that includes English, Bemba (the lingua franca of the Copperbelt), other Zambian languages, and glossolalia. For some believers, collective-personal prayer gives rise to ecstatic experiences as, caught up in the weight of their petitions and the power of the Holy Spirit, they prostrate themselves while weeping aloud or work up a sweat denouncing the power of the Devil. Despite the din created by collective-personal prayer, however, the leader remains in control. When she feels that a topic has been sufficiently addressed, she will indicate that everyone should be quiet, either with a loud ‘Amen!’, or the staccato clapping of her hands. At this signal everyone quickly falls silent, and the leader proceeds to announce the next prayer item on the agenda.

Intercession is followed by what is called, in English, 'praise and worship,' which amounts to thirty to forty-five minutes of call-and-response singing. It is during praise and worship that most people come to the service. This includes the pastor, who is never the first to arrive, and usually waits until the meeting is in full swing before entering the room. The music moves from upbeat songs accompanied by dancing to more contemplative pieces, which in turn move believers into a second period of collective-personal prayer. This time, there is no one choosing a topic, and participants are instead free to pray, weep, and sing in whatever way they – and the Holy Spirit – choose. While in this respect the collective-personal prayer that follows praise and worship is unstructured, the same mechanism used for bringing everyone together during intercession is again employed to signal the end of these prayers, as a church leader will stand up and either offer a loud prayer that gets everyone's attention, or simply say, 'Amen.' When this happens, believers return to their seats and wait for the next part of the service, the sermon.

Sermons in Pentecostal churches last for anywhere from thirty minutes to over an hour, depending in part on whether or not the pastor has chosen to make use of an interpreter.<sup>6</sup> During the sermon believers sit quietly in the plastic garden chairs or school desks that have been provided for them if they are lucky, on the floor if they are not. Some doze, but most pay at least enough attention to write down the scripture references mentioned in the sermon or follow along in their Bibles if they have them. And, particularly if the preacher is skilled and the topic exciting, many are not only dutiful note-takers, but keen participants as well. While preaching, pastors use several rhetorical devices to keep believers' attention, including asking them to 'turn to their neighbor' and repeat a phrase such as, 'Get ready!' or 'Are you listening?,' a practice common on Pentecostal television. Pastors will also say the first part of a word and wait for their audience to finish it, a technique used in traditional storytelling throughout Zambia.

The final component of a Pentecostal meeting is prayer ministry, presided over by the pastor and possibly other church leaders as well. This takes one of two forms. Sometimes a pastor will conclude his sermon by asking people who want to be prayed for to come to the front of the room, where he will lay hands on them and pray for them, sometimes causing them to fall to the ground. Alternately, the meeting may end without the pastor offering prayer only to have believers seek him out once everyone has gone outside. After the service a popular pastor will find himself with a queue of people waiting to see him, and he will either meet with them individually at that moment or schedule another time to attend to them later in the week.

Regardless of whether prayer ministry has been incorporated into the formal service or develops afterwards, Pentecostal meetings always end with a greeting. I refer to this practice as a 'receiving line,' following the convention at North American weddings for everyone to greet the bridal party in turn. In Pentecostal receiving lines a pastor and his wife leave the church first. Those who follow them outside shake their hands in greeting and then line up behind the pastor. This pattern continues until everyone has exited the church or classroom and



has greeted everyone else with a handshake (Figure 1). After this, the meeting breaks up in stages. Some people head home right away, while others linger to visit with friends, or perhaps to have a quick meeting of one of the many smaller groups attached to the congregation, such as the women's ministry or the choir.

Among different congregations there are a few small variations to the outline I have provided here, particularly with regard to the point in the service at which the monetary offering is taken up and whether people are given time to share testimonies.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, what I have presented here is a standard structure of Pentecostal worship, one that is remarkably uniform across the Copperbelt. Those familiar with other kinds of Christian practice will likely recognize the order of worship that I have just outlined as typical of more conservative Protestants, with the meeting oriented around the exposition of the biblical text through a sermon, rather than the Eucharist, as in a Catholic or Anglican mass. It is certainly true that the structure of Pentecostal worship on the Copperbelt is informed by Protestant practice more generally. Since most believers were part of missionary-established denominations before they became Pentecostals, this is not surprising. However, while Nsofu believers have doubtless taken a leaf from the Protestant prayer book, so to speak, I would argue that there is more to how Pentecostal services are organized than just their adoption of available Christian forms. This is because of the way that Pentecostal gatherings incorporate both egalitarian and hierarchical elements. As we make a second pass through the structure of Pentecostal worship, what we will be watching for this time is how hierarchy and egalitarianism are expressed in the various stages of a church service.

### **From Egalitarianism to Hierarchy in Pentecostal Worship**

Let us begin at the beginning with intercession, the first step of a Pentecostal service and one of the most egalitarian components of Pentecostal worship. That this is the case is most immediately obvious in the fact that intercession takes place before the pastor has arrived. More importantly, while engaged in collective-personal prayer believers are extremely independent, saying their own piece and taking their individual concerns directly to God (Haynes n.d.). The noise generated by collective-personal prayer means that this is a chance for everyone to have God's ear more or less privately, and to voice not only the concerns of the church, but their own personal requests as well. This last element, the individual 'burdens' included among the list of petitions a leader offers for intercession, is of special importance to many believers. Indeed, after one of the rare occasions where a leader failed to create space for individual requests during intercession, one of my informants told me that she felt as though she 'had not really prayed.'

Despite all of these individualized, egalitarian aspects, however, it is clear that intercession is not a completely personal affair in which each believer may do exactly as she pleases, but is rather governed by the leader who chooses the topics and tells people when to start and stop praying. In other words, intercession is marked by a tension between individual religious expression and the authority of lay leadership, the same tension we have identified as a key

characteristic of Pentecostalism more generally. The same tension is evident during praise and worship, with its call-and-response singing, and comes to a head when the music gives way to a period of collective-personal prayer that, unlike intercession, involves the entire congregation. This second period of collective-personal prayer is the most critical moment in the service. For one thing, it is the point where the most people are present, as many will have arrived late and at least a few will leave early. More importantly, this time of collective-personal prayer represents the service's 'ritual climax,' a '[moment] of intense and absorbing intimacy with a perceived divine presence' (Lindhardt 2011: 23), and a space within which individual believers have direct access to the power of the Holy Spirit. In shedding a bit more light on this critical point, it is helpful to begin by noting that collective-personal prayer has historically been a Pentecostal distinctive on the Copperbelt.

Although some mainline congregations now allow collective-personal prayer, thanks to a process of 'Pentecostalization' largely intended to keep people from leaving the missionary-established churches (Cheyeka 2006), this practice is still the hallmark of Pentecostalism in Zambia, as glossolalia is in North America. When narrating their decision to become Pentecostals, people in Nsofu often describe this type of prayer as the thing that drew them to leave behind another form of Christianity and become believers. In these discussions, my informants contrasted Pentecostal prayer with group prayer in mainline churches, where only the leader prays aloud while the congregation is expected to keep quiet and offer their petitions 'in their hearts.' In contrast to this comparatively passive experience, collective-personal prayer in Pentecostal groups actively involves everyone in a religious practice in which individual experiences with the Holy Spirit are especially pronounced. This means that in collective-personal prayer believers are confronted with Pentecostal egalitarianism; as promised in the Bible, the Spirit is poured out on 'all flesh.' It is the unpredictable movement of the Holy Spirit among believers during collective-personal prayer that sometimes transforms the tension between Pentecostal egalitarianism and the authority of church leaders into a conflict.

Occasionally, when a leader calls the people to order at the end of collective-personal prayer, one or more believers will not respond. If someone appears to be having an especially moving experience with the Holy Spirit – is on the floor weeping uncontrollably, for example – he or she may continue to pray or cry even though everyone else has quieted down. This is quite jarring, and in these situations people are visibly uncomfortable. Church leaders have two choices at this point. They can either resume the program by continuing with collective-personal prayer, hoping that the next time the group comes back together everyone will stop praying. Or, they can insist that the individual be quiet, perhaps even have them escorted out of the room in some extreme cases. Each of these options usually requires an appeal to other, supernatural, powers.

In those instances where collective-personal prayer is resumed, leaders will explain that they did so because it was clear that the Holy Spirit had not yet finished working, and it was therefore necessary to submit to him and allow him to continue to move in the congregation. For example, one Sunday at Key of

David, a Pentecostal church in Nsofu, collective-personal prayer resulted in a handful of people, including one or two members of the choir, weeping on the floor after everyone else had quieted down. A few moments passed before a man named Moses, who many members of the church considered to be a prophet, came forward and picked up a microphone. Using the first person, as he was speaking God's words, Moses explained to the congregation that God had placed several members of the church 'on the operating table,' removing sins from their lives to make them more like him. By the time Moses' prophecy was over everyone was silent, and those who had been prostrate had begun to stand up. Ushers quickly moved to the front of the room to receive the offering and the service proceeded without interruption.

When a person is forced to stop praying this is often explained, at least after the fact, as a response to a potential demonic influence (cf. Lynn 2013). In these cases it is assumed that demons kept the person from responding to a leader's instructions, as demons are by nature disobedient and do not respect the authority of men and women of God. Here, people may not speak in terms that are specifically demonic, but will often simply state that an individual has brought 'confusion.' This is a strong accusation, an English loanword that connotes the devil's desire to overthrow or undermine the work of the church. One of the people open to such charges was a woman named Gwen, who regularly attended a Pentecostal fellowship in Nsofu that I refer to as Higher Calling. Gwen would frequently continue praying after the rest of the group had stopped, and she was loud and sometimes frightening in her petitions, so much so that the young son of one of my informants refused to sit near her at Higher Calling meetings. Eventually, a member of the church leadership was assigned to sit with Gwen during the service in order, my informants said, to keep her prayers from getting out of control. Many Higher Calling members thought Gwen was a nuisance at best and, while they never made this accusation outright, my impression was that some thought that the situation was much worse – namely, that she was under the influence of demons.

When asked about moments when collective-personal prayer gets out of control, most Copperbelt believers say that it is right for a pastor to make everyone come to order, to interrupt those who continue praying after the rest of the congregation has stopped. Although they will certainly cite instances in which the Holy Spirit has broken into a meeting and moved people out of the structure that church services usually follow, Pentecostals on the Copperbelt insist that *Leswa wa order* – God is a God of order (cf. Bialecki 2011). In their eyes, most interruptions are not the work of God, but rather of malevolent spiritual forces, or perhaps of sinful people who cannot be bothered to heed a pastor's instructions.

Returning to the Pentecostal worship service, if praise and worship culminates in a moment at which egalitarianism is allowed its fullest expression, the sermon that follows represents a decisive move toward hierarchy. While up to this point the ritual content of the service has emphasized the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on everyone, during the sermon there are numerous indicators that the Holy Spirit's power has been concentrated in the particular person of the pastor.

Indeed, several aspects of the church service have indexed his<sup>8</sup> spiritual superiority even before the sermon begins. For example, as the pastor approaches the pulpit, a junior pastor or lay leader will usually carry his Bible for him, sometimes dusting off the pulpit with a handkerchief before setting the book down. The spatial arrangement of a Pentecostal meeting, whether it is held in a church building, a home, or a classroom, also points to a pastor's authority. Church leaders always sit at the front of the room, sometimes on a dais. While laypeople may be on the floor or in school desks, pastors sit comfortably on plastic garden chairs or a sofa. In many groups, they are provided with bottled mineral water, soft drinks, cookies, and sweets, though no one else at the meeting is given any refreshment. Even before a pastor begins to preach, then, his authority has been communicated in a number of ways.

Pentecostal sermons on the Copperbelt are characterized by two complementary approaches. The first of these is what believers sometimes refer to as 'scolding' (*ukukalipila*), or even 'punishment' (*ukupanika*). When scolding, pastors reprimand their congregations for their failure to conform to the standards of Pentecostal adherence – for not giving enough, praying enough, or fasting enough, for instance. While people feel somber after such messages, they will usually speak of them in positive terms, saying that these are the sorts of things they need to hear so that they can become better Pentecostals. In addition to scolding, the other approach pastors take in their sermons is encouragement (*ukukoselesha*). If scolding is about reprimanding believers for not doing the things that they should, encouragement is about spurring them on to do those very things. Encouragement is typically framed in terms of promises that faithful Pentecostal adherence will result in blessings, and sermons that take this approach understandably evoke the most positive responses. Often, preachers will move back and forth between scolding and encouragement in the same sermon.

Through scolding and encouragement church leaders index and reestablish a spiritual distinction between themselves and the members of their congregations. Perhaps the easiest way of communicating this is to point out that the relationship between church leaders and laypeople is regularly likened to the tie between a parent (*bafyashi*) and a child. Pastors and ordinary believers alike agree that this is the best form for this relationship to take – as opposed to friendship, for example, which they find less appropriate here. The parental tie is obviously hierarchical, especially in a place like Zambia, where generation has historically been one of the most salient sources of social distinction (e.g. Richards 1956). A pastor's role as a parent is actualized in preaching perhaps more than in any other activity; like a parent, he instructs his followers about what they ought to do and reprimands them when they fail to do what he says. Pastors are able to offer this type of guidance because of their position of religious superiority, and that position is reinforced as believers listen to sermons each week.

After the authority of the pastor has been established through the sermon, the service concludes with a final demonstration of his spiritual superiority. Simply put, prayer ministry happens because pastors are understood to have a special

anointing from the Holy Spirit that makes their prayers especially effective. They are chosen by God and often seen as uniquely close to him. This is why believers go to church leaders rather than other laypeople for prayer. By doing so, they both underscore a pastor's special spiritual status and reproduce the religious distinction between church leaders and themselves.

Over the course of a Pentecostal church service, then, the egalitarian elements of Pentecostalism, which emphasize the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all believers, give way to a religious hierarchy in which certain people stand out as having special skill with regard to spiritual gifts. In making this observation it is worth noting that as the service progresses ritual work is increasingly accomplished by church leaders acting alone. During intercession the pastor is not present, and the role of the lay leader is minor, as the work of prayer is carried out primarily by other lay participants. Praise and worship and, to a lesser extent, the sermon, are likewise dependent on the participation of ordinary believers as they join in the call-and-response singing and respond to the rhetorical cues of the pastor. In contrast, prayer ministry is unidirectional, as the work of prayer in this case is carried out by church leaders acting without the assistance of laypeople – indeed, in prayer ministry pastors are instead acting *on* ordinary believers, or at least on their behalf. Having teased out the hierarchical and egalitarian axes of Copperbelt Pentecostal ritual practice, we are now in a position to discuss how all of this relates to the social world of believers. Doing so requires us to examine social life on the Copperbelt more generally, paying particular attention to hierarchy.

### **In Praise of Hierarchy: Social Life in Southern Africa**

It is not controversial to say that hierarchy is central to social life in southern Africa. Whether worked out on the basis of gender, chieftaincy, or seniority, hierarchy runs straight through the relational world of most people in the region (e.g. Richards 1956, Barnes 1967, Crehan 1997, Pritchett 2001, Bolt 2014, Haynes 2012, Hickel forthcoming, Haynes and Hickel forthcoming). On the Copperbelt, the most significant hierarchical relationships are those that develop between people of different economic statuses. The reasons for this are ethnographically complex, but are helpfully summarized in James Ferguson's recent discussion of the importance of 'dependence' in the social organization of southern Africa (Ferguson 2013). In this treatment, dependence is a central quality of the relationships formed between a leader or patron and a group of followers or clients.

In a region where wealth has historically been measured 'in people' (Miers and Kopytoff 1977), the more dependents a person had, the more power he could control. In other words, wealth in southern Africa is not only measured in terms of commodities (although commodities are important), but also in terms of 'the quantity and quality of social relationships secured through these commodities' (Pritchett 2001: 210). While leaders gain status by amassing wealth in people, dependents also stand to benefit from this arrangement. In the social framework of dependence, power over people also means responsibility for them. Historically, if a leader did not do enough to secure the wellbeing of those below

him, these people were often free to look for someone else who would more adequately provide for their needs. This was certainly the case among Bemba village headmen in northern Zambia. In order to attract people to his village, an aspiring headman would have to promise provision; as one such person told the anthropologist Audrey Richards, ““They will go back with me... when they see I am a great man, and that they will have meat at my village”” (Richards 1939: 213). Once a village was founded, ‘the headman’s efforts [could not] be relaxed’ (Richards 1939: 213), as he needed to make sure to keep people happy in order to prevent them moving to another village. If too many people left, the livelihood of the village, and more importantly the headman’s power – again, the power of wealth in people – were at risk. In short, relationships of dependence are hierarchical ties that are fundamentally structured by the distribution of resources, as those with greater access to wealth pass it along to their followers, who in turn contribute to the former’s power and prestige.

It is not difficult to see parallels between a model of social organization focused on dependence and the relational life of the Pentecostal congregations I have just described. Understood in these terms, pastors are patrons who mediate the power of the Holy Spirit, passing it along to others through prayer and preaching, as well as prophecy and exorcism. Here, the hierarchy that matters most is not an economic hierarchy, but a hierarchy of spiritual strength and skill. Given the overarching emphasis on wealth in people in the region, it should come as no surprise that people in Nsofu judge the power of a pastor in part by the size of his congregation. By the same token, believers speak of the benefits they have enjoyed since joining a pastor’s church and sitting under his leadership. After a series of what Pentecostals call ‘breakthroughs’ at Key of David, which included jobs for those who had been unemployed, Bana Charles<sup>9</sup> explained to me that people were prospering because of their spiritual parent, Pastor Mwanza. While God was acknowledged as the source of these blessings, in Bana Charles’ eyes Pastor Mwanza was clearly the mediator.

In Pentecostalism, then, we find a set of social relationships characterized by dependence and structured by spiritual rather than economic difference.<sup>10</sup> Let me be clear that in emphasizing the hierarchical character of Pentecostalism here, I do not wish to suggest that it is more hierarchical than other forms of Christianity; it would be hard to make such a case. I am arguing, though, that because Pentecostal practice results in charismatic differentiation both very quickly and on a very small scale – remember, most Pentecostal groups consist of only a few dozen people – this religion produces and integrates people into hierarchical relationships of dependence with particular ease.

Given the structural parallels between Pentecostal social relationships and the ties of dependence that are central to local social organization, it is not surprising that Pentecostalism has become so popular on the Copperbelt. However, I want to argue that the expansion of this religion stems not only from its formal similarity to the overarching Copperbelt social world, but also and more importantly from the ways that this social world has been challenged by recent economic history. Privatization, currency devaluation, and structural adjustment more generally, as well as fluctuating copper prices and the most

recent financial crisis, have had a profound effect on relational life in places like Nsofu. This is because these changes have pushed more and more people to the bottom of the Copperbelt economic hierarchy, greatly reducing the number of those who have access to the resources necessary for ties of dependence. Today there is a growing number of clients vying for the support of a shrinking number of patrons. All of this means that traditional relationships of dependence are both harder to come by and increasingly unstable, vulnerable to the unpredictable movements of the liberalized Zambian economy. As I have argued in greater detail elsewhere (Haynes 2012), the social effects of economic uncertainty make Pentecostalism especially compelling to people in Nsofu. Because the hierarchy that structures Pentecostal relationships is primarily spiritual rather than economic, the ties of dependence that form in churches are insulated from the market, and as such they are comparatively stable and therefore clearly attractive.

Returning to our discussion of ritual, the centrality of hierarchy – and with it, dependence – is obvious in the structure of Pentecostal worship. Over the course of a church service the egalitarianism aspects of Pentecostalism, which emphasize the possibility that anyone in the congregation might receive the Holy Spirit, give way to the hierarchical authority of those who are known to have received it in greater measure. Hierarchy encompasses egalitarianism every time believers come together for worship, underscoring the importance of hierarchical ties for believers and for people on the Copperbelt more generally, while also indexing and reproducing the framework of spiritual distinction that undergirds Pentecostal ties of dependence.

Having said all this, we must still acknowledge that egalitarianism figures in nearly every part of the ritual event analyzed here. Even prayer ministry, which we have identified as the most hierarchical part of a Pentecostal service, is either preceded or followed by a receiving line that includes everyone. From a social structural perspective, this egalitarianism runs contrary to the hierarchical ties I have emphasized so far, as it spreads access to the Holy Spirit democratically across the congregation, rather than concentrating it in a few individuals. The egalitarian moments in Pentecostal worship are moments in which any believer might receive a special anointing from God, which may take away from the authority of the pastor and even result in a schism. While on the one hand Pentecostal ritual reproduces and reinforces spiritual distinction, then, on the other it also leaves room for the possibility that existing frameworks of authority might be dismantled. This potential for ‘endless fission,’ while obviously destructive to the hierarchies of spiritual dependence that I have argued make Pentecostalism so compelling, is in fact a key component of the long-term social productivity of this religion. This requires a bit of explanation.

### **Undoing Hierarchy, or Why Egalitarianism Matters**

On the Copperbelt, the primary threat to the relational world of Pentecostals is the possibility that the ties of dependence that form between leaders and laypeople might be corrupted by economic concerns. According to my informants, one of the biggest problems in their churches is the tendency of

pastors to pursue relationships with wealthier members of their congregations more often than they did with those who were less well off. In my observation, these complaints are warranted. It is rare for a small, independent congregation like Higher Calling to be able to generate sufficient funds to support a pastor, especially one who has a family. Faced with the practical need to pay rent and children's school fees, pastors will often focus their attention – for instance, by visiting a believer and praying for her children – on those who are most likely to give them a little something 'for transport,' as the local euphemism has it. This state of affairs presents two problems to the model of Pentecostal relational life that I have developed here. In the first place, when leaders seek the support of wealthy laypeople, the hierarchy between them has effectively been reversed, as pastors find themselves dependent on ordinary believers, rather than the other way around. Secondly, under these circumstances relationships among Pentecostals are no longer structured by differences in spiritual strength or skill, but have instead begun to be organized by the same sorts of economic distinctions that have made social life outside the church so difficult in recent decades.

In the light of the possibility that the social structures formed in Pentecostal churches may be compromised in this way, the potential for new leadership to emerge at any moment becomes especially important. This, I think, is the reason that egalitarianism plays such a visible role in Pentecostal worship despite the fact that hierarchical relationships are so central to the attraction of this religion on the Copperbelt. Over the course of a Pentecostal service, believers not only move from egalitarianism to hierarchy, but also allow the former at least one moment of unbridled expression. The period of collective-personal prayer that represents the most critical point of a Pentecostal meeting serves as a powerful reminder to everyone present that new leadership might arise at any time, and indeed, provides a context in which that may happen. Given the significance of this period of collective-personal prayer, it makes sense that the only way pastors are able to regain control in those moments when people do not stop praying is to appeal to powers stronger than they, whether by denouncing the devil or, perhaps more effectively, proclaiming that God is at work. In either case, the implication is that established leaders still have the superior power of the Holy Spirit, either to cast out demons or to discern that God wishes collective-personal prayer to continue.

Although the social resources of egalitarianism are always made available to believers in the context of Pentecostal ritual, I must be careful to point out that they are not usually necessary. Situations when collective-personal prayer threatens to get out of hand are relatively rare in Nsofu. Typically, worship reaches a fevered pitch only to quickly and effectively be brought back under control. As my informants insist, *Lesa wa order*. I think this arrangement reflects exactly what they want from their religious adherence: an established hierarchy of charisma that facilitates relationships of religious dependence. That Pentecostal ritual has the potential to effect this desired result is quite clear, and this is reflected in the structure of the Sunday service, as it moves toward increasingly hierarchical forms of religious practice. At the same time, egalitarianism is never far behind, and for all that Pentecostal worship



underscores the capacity of this religion to create hierarchical ties, it also contains within itself the tools to replace existing relationships with new ones as necessary.

Before moving on to my conclusion, it is worth noting that although my discussion has described the social productivity of Pentecostalism quite neatly, the situation is, as is undoubtedly the case with all ethnographic examples, a bit messier up close. There are, for instance, some believers whose relationship with a pastor is more enduring than his charismatic authority – in other words, those who will remain in his church even when it has become clear that economic considerations have begun to structure the relationships he forms with laypeople. There are also what believers call ‘backsliders,’ or people who stop being Pentecostals, and in so doing abandon Pentecostal social relationships. Despite these inevitable exceptions, however, the analysis I have presented here points to a key component of the social productivity of Copperbelt Pentecostalism, as religious practice produces relationships of spiritual dependence.

While this model has emphasized the formal similarity between the social ties that form in Pentecostal churches and the framework of dependence that has traditionally been central to southern African social life, this does not mean that there is no space for novelty or innovation here; indeed, the social productivity of Pentecostal religious life is marked by a blend of the extant and the extemporaneous. To those familiar with the recent anthropological literature on African Pentecostalism, this will come as no surprise. In contrast to earlier analyses of this religion that emphasized the need for believers to ‘make a complete break with the past’ (Meyer 1998), more recent discussions have highlighted the importance of both continuity and discontinuity in the lives of believers (e.g. Daswani 2013; Engelke 2010; Lindhardt 2010; Haynes 2012). In closing, I would like to address the analysis of Pentecostal ritual I have laid out here in terms that reflect this interplay of continuity and discontinuity by briefly turning my attention to the issue of creativity.

### **Conclusion: Hierarchy, Charisma, and Creativity**

Up to this point in my discussion I have not engaged what is probably the most theoretically sophisticated study of Pentecostal ritual to emerge to date, namely Thomas Csordas’ discussion of charismatic Catholics in the United States (Csordas 1994, 1997).<sup>11</sup> One of the key contributions of Csordas’ work is his emphasis on creativity, which contrasts with other anthropological discussions of ritual, especially those of Maurice Bloch. Csordas demonstrates that creativity does not entail a complete separation from extant forms, particularly those of language. Rather, he suggests that creativity and spontaneity are most adequately realized within the constraints of an established framework, such as the structure of a sonnet. Following Csordas, I want to conclude by highlighting the creative aspects of the social processes I have described here, which operate within the boundaries of established relational forms, but which are no less original for that fact. The creativity of Pentecostal sociality is especially easy to see from the perspective of pastors, for whom church leadership represents a

new mechanism for realizing culturally salient models of authority. Here, an observation from rural Zambia provides a helpful starting point.

In his discussion of style and social transformation among the Lunda-Ndembu<sup>12</sup> of northwestern Zambia, James Pritchett writes:

Clearly there exist certain traditions that could be compared to a well-worn path. But individuality and creativity can be expressed ever so well by the way one walks that path... Reaching the top of a hierarchy is... the well-trodden path. Individuality is expressed through the selection of the particular hierarchy within which one feels most capable of succeeding, the manner in which one strives to reach the top, or the construction of a new hierarchy (Pritchett 2001: 245).

In the light of these observations, the creativity of Pentecostal pastors is not difficult to see. To wit, Pentecostal Christianity offers a relatively new form of hierarchy that in turn provides the possibility for novel forms of self-realization. As Karen Lauterbach (2010: 260) points out in her discussion of church formation in Ghana, 'Young pastors represent an emerging economic, political and social force that employs innovative strategies in the process of becoming "someone" in society' (also see van Dijk 1992, Werbner 2011). While on the Copperbelt it is clear that this creativity has become especially necessary in a political economic context in which traditional pathways to authority have been constricted, both cultural precedence (e.g. Pritchett 2001) and Pentecostal theology (e.g. Smith 2010, Bialecki 2009) suggest that we should not underestimate the importance of novelty for its own sake here.

That Pentecostalism provides a framework for new modes of self-realization on the Copperbelt is particularly apparent in the growing variety of means through which spiritual distinction is established in places like Nsofu. One of the most striking changes I have noticed since I first began spending time with Copperbelt Pentecostals in 2003 is the increased acceptance of novel religious practices, such as the use of water in healing. A decade ago most believers would have viewed such additions with suspicion, wary as they are of anything resembling syncretism. Although there are still some among my informants who firmly reject these changes, others have embraced the new elements of Pentecostal practice, and indeed, actively seek them out (cf. Daswani 2013). This observation in turn suggests that novelty and newness in the pursuit of religious differentiation – and ultimately, hierarchy – are not just a concern for church leaders. On the contrary, many lay believers are drawn to emerging and creative forms of ritual life, which set their leaders apart as unique and consequently incorporate them into ties of dependence marked by novel forms of spiritual distinction.

Therefore, while the interplay of hierarchy and egalitarianism in Pentecostal ritual that I have laid out above certainly reflects established models of social organization, this should not be taken as an indication that the novelty often associated with Pentecostal ritual is not at work here. While I have no doubt that the ties of dependence produced by Pentecostal adherence are made especially

compelling by economic uncertainty and crisis, I do not wish to suggest that these circumstances are by themselves responsible for the meteoric rise of this form of Christianity on the Copperbelt. There, as in other parts of the continent, “the relationship between crisis and religious revival is by no means a causal one” (Marshall 2009: 8). Rather, what I want to emphasize is a Weberian elective affinity between the new forms of social distinction provided by Pentecostalism and the particular social difficulties that have accompanied economic liberalization. In Pentecostal religious practice we therefore find hierarchy and egalitarianism working together to produce social outcomes that are at the same time culturally salient, reflecting the importance of dependence, and historically unique. Just as it embodies a tension between democratic and authoritarian instantiations of the Holy Spirit, then, this religion also straddles the past and the present, bringing together continuity and discontinuity as it interacts with the social complexities of contemporary urban Africa.

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## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> There are, of course, important exceptions here, most notably Thomas Csordas' path-breaking work on charismatic Catholicism (Csordas 1994, 1997), which I discuss briefly in the conclusion to this article.

<sup>2</sup> Also significant here is the type of ritual activity under examination, such as singing together or listening to one person preach.

<sup>3</sup> The name of this township, as well as the names of all informants and congregations mentioned here, are pseudonyms.

<sup>4</sup> I have conducted a total of twenty-two months of fieldwork on the Copperbelt over the course of four field trips (2006, 2008-2009, 2013, 2014). All but two months of this fieldwork have been in Nsofu.

<sup>5</sup> This cycle neatly illustrates Weber's famous treatment of charisma (Weber 1946: 245-264)

<sup>6</sup> Many Pentecostal pastors preach in English, and some therefore employ an interpreter to translate their message into Bemba.

<sup>7</sup> While both the offering and testimonies are important elements of Pentecostal worship, I regret that I do not have space to take them up here.

<sup>8</sup> Although there are a few female pastors in Zambia, the overwhelming majority of Pentecostal pastors are men.

<sup>9</sup> The feminine 'Bana' can be used as a Bemba translation of 'Mrs.' or, as in the case of Bana Charles, to denote a tekonym.

<sup>10</sup> This is not to say that economic factors do not come into play in these relationships, or even that they do not at times inform a pastor's charismatic authority. In the light of the influence of the prosperity gospel, which I do not deal with here but have explored elsewhere (Haynes 2012), things could hardly be otherwise. However, for my informants on the Copperbelt it is paramount that the primary source of religious distinction be understood in terms of charisma, rather than material prosperity.

<sup>11</sup> While there are important theological and ecclesiastical differences between charismatic Catholics and Pentecostals, these groups have historically had a great deal of influence on one another. Moreover, there are key aspects of charismatic Catholic ritual life that mirror the religious practice of the Pentecostals examined in this paper, and it is therefore especially helpful to examine the two groups together.

<sup>12</sup> The Zambian ethnic group made famous in Victor Turner's studies of ritual

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#### Figure Captions:

Figure 1: Worshippers at Key of David Church shaking hands after the Sunday morning service in a receiving line. Photo: Naomi Haynes